



United States Mission to the OSCE

Response to the Foreign Minister of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, Mr. Vuk Draskovic

As delivered by Ambassador Julie Finley
to the Permanent Council, Vienna
September 6, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The United States would like to welcome the Foreign Minister of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro, Mr. Vuk Draskovic, back to the Permanent Council. We thank you, sir, for your remarks.

When you were here in June of last year, Minister Draskovic, our delegation commended the authorities of Serbia and Montenegro for the positive and constructive relationship they had established with the OSCE Mission. Also expressed was its appreciation for the excellent cooperation our delegation enjoyed with yours here in Vienna. I am very pleased to be able to say today that these productive relationships have continued to prosper. The United States thanks you, Minister Draskovic, for your support in this regard.

Mr. Chairman, all of us await the results of Ambassador Eide's report on the implementation of UN Standards in Kosovo. I will not try to anticipate today what his report will say, nor will I comment on the degree to which the United States believes Kosovo has achieved the eight Standards that the international community set for it in 2002. Evaluating Kosovo's progress in implementing the Standards is the job the United Nations gave Ambassador Eide to do in early June. He was chosen for this task because of his broad diplomatic experience and knowledge of southeastern Europe, and because he is known by all of us as a man of unimpeachable integrity and independence. We will await his report and then proceed based on the conclusions and recommendations in it.

This is not to say that we are without opinions on the question of Kosovo future status talks and the role the international community may ask the United States to play in them. Allow me a few moments to re-state our principal positions:

First, the United States does not believe the status quo in Kosovo is sustainable or desirable. It satisfies no one and leaves open the possibility of renewed violence.

Second, regardless of whether these future status talks begin this fall or at some future date, the U.S. will remain actively engaged throughout these negotiations and will see them through to their conclusion.

Third, along with other members of the Contact Group, we believe there can be no return to the relationship that existed between Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo in 1998 and 1999. Nor should there be any partition of Kosovo or change of its current territory. Beyond that,

we do not favor any specific outcome of the talks. Our role, and that of the international community, should be to facilitate a process to arrive at a future status for Kosovo.

Minister Draskovic, my government understands the extraordinary challenges facing Serbia and Montenegro over the next year in dealing with the future of Kosovo, as well as the future of the State Union. We believe that accelerating the political and economic reform needed to fully integrate Serbia and Montenegro and Kosovo into Euro-Atlantic institutions can only make meeting these challenges faster and easier.

In this respect, we call on Serbia and Montenegro to accelerate the pace of political and economic reform and to strengthen the rule of law. In key areas such as judicial and police reform, assistance provided by the OSCE Mission and other international institutions must be matched by continuing engagement by the authorities in Serbia and Montenegro - not only to adopt legislation that meets international standards, but also to transform domestic institutions so that they can implement such legislation effectively.

We also call again upon Serbia and Montenegro to make good on the promises made in Dayton ten years ago by delivering General Ratko Mladic to the International Criminal Tribunal on Yugoslavia. Until General Mladic appears in The Hague, the United States cannot support Serbia for membership in the Partnership for Peace.

The need for courage and political will to address war crimes issues applies not only to ICTY cooperation, where the final steps should be taken without further delay, but also to domestic prosecution and trial of persons suspected of war crimes. This is an area where the OSCE Mission should continue to provide assistance, for example in capacity building, as a matter of priority.

We urge Serbia and Montenegro to develop additional effective measures to promote further progress in southern Serbia, especially economic development and the integration of minorities into state institutions. Similarly, we appeal once again to Belgrade to facilitate, rather than to block, the participation of ethnic Serbs in the provisional institutions of self-government in Kosovo as well their involvement in deliberations on decentralization.

Allow me to say in conclusion, Mr. Chairman, that regardless of the ultimate outcome of any future status talks, the United States shares Serbia and Montenegro's determination to see the development – in both Serbia and Montenegro themselves and in Kosovo – of a society that is truly multi-ethnic and tolerant, one in which the human rights, freedom of movement, and security of all its people are fully guaranteed and respected.

Thank You.